Bone-Chilling
Bitterly cold and windy through tomorrow. Low tonight in teens; high tomorrow in mid-20s. Details: B-2.

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Assassinations Probers Claim New Leads

By Jeremiah O'Leary
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The special House committee probing the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr., is investigating "new and unpursued leads" in both slayings, a preliminary report revealed today.

Chief Counsel Richard A. Sprague said the committee staff has interviewed persons with new and relevant information on both assassinations who had never been contacted by investigative agencies.

According to Rep. Christopher J. Dodd, D-Conn., the preliminary report also raises the question of whether FBI agents had Dr. King under surveillance when he was slain in Memphis, Tenn., in April 1968.

In a comment issued with the report, Dodd said he has long felt there are many unanswered questions about the roles of the CIA and FBI in investigating the two slayings.

"THE SPECIFIC questions highlighted in this report as to the conduct of the CIA and its apparent knowledge of some of Lee Harvey Oswald's activities in Mexico before the Kennedy assassination are examples of just such continuing concerns," Dodd said. "Another example underscored in this document is the question of the FBI's reported surveillance of Dr. King and whether FBI agents were in Memphis and near the civil rights leader at the time of his death."

Dodd said allegations of possible conspiracies and withholding of evidence are other questions which should be resolved once and for all.

Sprague informed the committee that the findings of the preliminary investigations cannot yet be verified, but he mentioned two examples of the kind of information turned up in the three months of the committee's existence.

Sprague said initial questioning of an ex-CIA agent, David A. Phillips, former chief of western hemisphere operations for the CIA, led staff members to Mexico, where they located and interviewed new witnesses.

"These witnesses had never been sought out before by any investigative body," Sprague said in the report, "notwithstanding the fact that they had important informatioon concerning statements by Oswald in Mexico within 60 days of the assassination of President Kennedy.

"With respect to the assassination of Dr. King, committee counsel obtained relevant information from a witness who had never been interviewed before by any investigative agency. This witness has stated that James Earl Ray related to him the fact that after Ray fled to Europe, Ray contacted another person from whom he received further instructions to aid in his continuing flight."

See PROBE, A-4

Continued From A-1

SPRAGUE SAID the committee has been provided with a list of hundreds of questions, and identified several hundred witnesses who must be interviewed regarding the Kennedy assassination.

The committee report said the CIA alone has more than 60 cartons of material relating to the death of Kennedy and Oswald's activities before Kennedy was slain in Dallas in November 1963.

There also are hundreds of questions about the King case and the committee noted that it has completed a detailed analysis of stipulations of fact contained in the guilty plea made by Ray in March 1969.

"The committee noted that during the course of the plea proceedings," the report said, "Ray rose to advise the court that he did not concur with statements made by both the state prosecutor and his own attorney that there had not been a conspiracy to assassinate Dr. King. The committee does not mean to imply that there was or was not a conspiracy. It merely indicates that this is one of the area's which requires further investigation, especially in view of the failure to obtain a full statement of involvement from Ray by Tennessee authorities."

Rep. Thomas N. Downing, D-Va., the retiring chairman of the assassination panel, transmitted the committee report to the House with a request that the House approve a first-year budget of $6.5 million for the probe. The committee report said that in the years that have passed since Ray pleaded guilty and the Warren Commission named Oswald as the sole assassin of Kennedy, "old doubts have remained and new disturbing questions have been raised as additional evidence has come to light."

THE REPORT CITED four points as examples of these new issues:

- Did the Central Intelligence Agency deliberately avoid furnishing critical information to the FBI which would have resulted in the surveillance of Oswald prior to the assassination of President Kennedy? If so, why?
- Was critical evidence withheld from the Warren Commission? If so, why?
- There are reports of intensive surveillance of Dr. King by domestic intelligence agencies including the FBI. Who and where were these agents at the time of King's assassination? Do they have any evidence concerning the assassination or any plans to commit it? Was this surveillance deliberately curtailed prior to the assassination, and if so, why?

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- There are reports that there were unusual transfers of personnel by the Memphis fire and police departments on April 3 and , 1968, which may or may not have affected the security of Dr. King. If so, why were these transfers made and at whose direction?

DOWNING SAID the select committee unanimously recommends that the House immediately move to continue the investigation of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of Kennedy and King; that the House immediately re-establish the Select Committee to insure that evidence now under subpoena will remain intact and that the budget be approved.

Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, D-Texas, who will succeed Downing as chairman, said the committee does not intend to prove or disprove any theory concerning the assassinations, but will conduct a completely new independent study. He noted that the committee already has obtained a substantial amount of information and evidence to prepare the ground for the two-year investigation and mainly open hearings that are planned.

"The committee is unanimous in its conclusion that it must be able to rely completely on its own resources," Gonzalez said. "We know that neither the FBI nor CIA cooperated fully with the Warren Commission and we know that the FBI director in 1968 (the late J. Edgar Hoover) had passionate feelings against Dr. King, feelings that might well have been reflected in less than objective work by his subordinates."